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REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

[30 April 2001]

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I. LAND AND PEOPLE

1. General background information:

Official name of the country: Republic of Moldova

Geographic location: in the south-east of Europe, between Romania and Ukraine, in the basin of the Prut and Nistru Rivers

Land area: 33,800 km

Population: 4,320,000 (1 January 1997)

Population density: 128 inhabitants/km^2

Capital: Chişnău city (approximately 780,000 inhabitants)

National Day: Independence Day, 27 August

State flag: three vertical, equal stripes, red, yellow and blue, with the arms of the Republic in the middle

Form of government: parliamentary republic

National legislature: single-chamber parliament, composed of 101 members directly elected through proportional representation

Head of State: President

Administrative divisions: 10 counties, 1 Administrative Territorial Unit, 14 municipalities, 51 towns, 662 villages

Date of admission to the United Nations: 2 March 1992

2. Economic Data:

External debt: US$ 1.3 billion (1998)

External debt administered by the Government on 1 April 2000: 749.9 million lei

GDP (1991): 12,204,000,000 lei, constituting approximately 95.6 per cent (in comparative prices) of GDP in 1998

Unemployment rate: 11.1 per cent in 1999, according to the classification of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The economically active population constituted 46.1 per cent of the total population. The employed population constituted 41.0 per cent of the total population and 54.5 per cent of the population over 15.

The number of unemployed was 34,900 officially registered on 1 January 2000 (187,000 according to the ILO classification)

3. Other human development parameters:

Table 1

Human Development Index

Life expectancy at birth (years) 1998	Adult literacy rate (%) 1998	Combined first, second and third-level gross enrolment ratio (%) 1998	Real GNP per capita (PPPS) 1998	Life expectancy index 1998	Education index 1998	GDP index 1998	Human development index
67.0	96.4	73.4	2 042	0.700	0.887	0.503	0.697

Table 2

Human Development Profile

Life expectancy at birth (years) 1998	Population with access to:			Daily calories supply per capita 1998	Adult literacy rate 1998	Enrolment ratio for all levels (%) 1998	Periodicals (pieces per capita) 1998	TV-sets (pieces per 100 persons) 1998	Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDP) US$ 1997	Gross National Product (GNP) per capita US$ 1997
	Health care (%) 1998	Safe water (%) 1998	Sanitation (%) 1998							
67.0	100	...	...	1 980.3	96.4	73.4	136	15	2 207	545

Table 3

Demographic Profile

Estimated population (millions)			Annual population growth rate (%)		Rural population (as % of total) 1998	General birth rate 1998	General death rate 1998	General fertility rate 1997	Contraceptive prevalence rate, any method (%) 1998
1960	1998	2000	1960-1998	1998-2000					
3.0	4.3	4.3	0.85	-0.45	54	10.9	11.1	1.67	27*

* Including women registered as using intrauterine and oral contraceptive methods, as a percentage of women 15-49 years old.

Table 4

Human Development Index

Life expectancy at birth (years)		Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)		Adult literacy rate (%) 1989	Enrolment ratio for all levels (%, age 7-22) 1998	Illiterate adults (age 15 and above; millions) 1989	Illiterate females (age 15 and above; millions) 1989	Children not in primary school (thousands) 1998	Children dying before age five (thousands) 1998
1959	1998	1960	1998						
68.1	67.0	48.2	17.8	96.4	71	0.1	0.09	11.0	1.1

Source: Tables 1-4 from National Human Development Report: Republic of Moldova 1999, UNDP.

4. Population development, by age category:

	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998
Total population	4 366.3	4 334.4	4 320.0	4 304.7	4 293.0
Males (thousands)	2 082.0	2 071.8	2 065.0	2 057.6	2 056.3
% of total	47.7	47.8	47.8	47.8	47.9
Urban population (thousands)	2 073.6	2 004.1	1 995.3	1 987.7	1 976.3
% of total	47.5	46.3	46.2	46.2	46.0
Structure of population according to age:					
Under the employment age (%)	29.7	28.6	28.2	27.6	27.4
Of employment age (%)	54.9	55.6	56.0	56.4	56.5
Of retirement age (60 for women, 65 for men)	15.4	15.8	15.8	16.0	16.1
Population natural increase rate	8.0	0.8	0.5	0.0	-0.2
Birth rate	17.7	13.0	12.0	11.9	0.9
Mortality rate	9.7	12.2	11.5	11.9	11.1
Marriage rate	9.4	7.5	6.0	6.1	6.0
Divorce rate	3.0	3.4	3.1	3.1	3.0
Infant mortality rate (per 1 000 live births)	19.0	21.2	20.2	19.9	17.8

II. POLITIC STRUCTURE AND GENERAL LEGISLATIVE SYSTEM IN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED

5. The Republic of Moldova, as a sovereign and independent State, entered the international arena after the collapse of the USSR, by passing the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Soviet Socialist Moldovan Republic on 23 June 1990 and the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova on 27 August 1991.

6. As a part of the USSR, Soviet Moldova witnessed the horrors of genocide, manifested through mass deportations, organized starvation and forced denationalization. The Russian language was imposed as the official language.

7. In the last decade, political and cultural activities were carried out in the Republic of Moldova for the democratization of social and political life and for the emancipation of the population. The Republic of Moldova passed the Law on the Return of the Moldovan Language to the Latin Alphabet No. 3462-XI, the Law on the Statute of the State Language No. 3464-XI, the Law on the Use of Languages Spoken in Moldova No. 3465-XI (31 August 1989), the Parliamentary Decision "On the Approval of the Regulation regarding the State Flag of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic" and the Law on the State Anthem of the Republic of Moldova; it instituted the position of the President of the country (3 September 1990); it selected the ancient symbols - the eagle and the auroch's head - as the State Escutcheon

(3 November 1990); it changed the name of the country from the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Republic of Moldova (23 May 1991). So far, the Republic of Moldova has established diplomatic relations with about 140 States.

8. At the same time, the process of State consolidation was seriously affected by the separatist actions of certain forces in the eastern part of the country. Over the centuries, a multinational population had formed, a part of which (Gagauz and Bulgarians - about 3.2 per cent) had concentrated in the southern part of the country. In order to prevent the separation of the Republic of Moldova from the Soviet bloc, the Soviet authorities decided to use the issue of national separatism as a means of blackmail. The coordinated policy of the separatist leaders in the district on the left bank of the Nistru River, of Bender town and the Gagauz region, was aimed against the constitution of a new unitary and independent State. It had as its purpose the preservation of the old ideological, political and economic orientations. Consequently, on 2 September 1990, in Parcani village, a meeting of a group of all levels of deputies chosen in the eastern districts of the Republic of Moldova (Transnistria) was held. This meeting proclaimed itself a congress and proclaimed the constitution of "The Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic of Transnistria as a component of the USSR". The majority of the 64 deputies who represented the eastern districts and Bender town in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, participated in that congress.

9. This act took the political fight for the sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova out of the legal, constitutional limits. As a result, the initiative was taken over by those political forces in Transnistria which, in order to accomplish their goals, began to use tougher and tougher methods from the totalitarian arsenal.

10. More and more of those 64 deputies, either on their own initiative or under the pressure of the Transnistrian extremist forces, did not participate in the working meetings of the Parliament of Moldova. Political extremism started to dominate Transnistria, becoming a "norm", to the detriment of pluralism of opinion and dialogue.

11. As a consequence of the implementation of anti-constitutional political procedures, determined and favoured to a great extent by the political forces in Moscow, who pleaded in favour of maintaining the Soviet Union, premises for the violation of fundamental human rights appeared in the eastern districts of the Republic of Moldova.

12. Currently there is a clearly defined tendency in the Republic of Moldova of creating the mechanisms and key factors for the implementation of a system of promotion and respect of human rights, which is based in particular on international legal instruments. Title II of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova is entitled Fundamental Rights, Liberties and Duties, and is devoted to them, taking into consideration their importance and essence.

13. Reform of the national legal system started in the Republic of Moldova with independence, and legal and judicial reform started in January 1993. The subsequent passage of several laws and the introduction of modifications in the Penal Procedure Code and the Penal Code offered the Republic of Moldova the opportunity to get closer to international standards, especially to the European ones.

14. The Republic of Moldova has signed and ratified a set of international documents relevant for different spheres: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992) and others, including those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe that imply commitments (pledges) regarding the protection of ethnic minorities; the final documents of the Madrid and Vienna meetings on security and cooperation in Europe; the document of the Copenhagen Conference on the Human Dimension; the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe was ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on 22 October 1996.

15. Several drafts of the Constitution were examined by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), and the text, of the new Constitution, adopted on 29 July 1994, follows, to a great extent, the experts' comments. The contribution of international experts was important. They made necessary specifications and corrections, and thus a modern constitution was elaborated, in accordance with the conditions for guaranteeing a legal system which should correspond to the current exigencies in the field of human rights protection.

16. Article 1 stipulates that the Republic of Moldova, governed by the rule of law, is a democratic State, in which the dignity of people, their rights and freedoms, the open development of human personality, justice and political pluralism represent supreme values that shall be guaranteed.

17. "Democracy in the Republic of Moldova is exercised under conditions of political pluralism, which is incompatible with dictatorship or totalitarianism, and no ideology may be pronounced as an official ideology of the State" (art. 5).

18. The national unity "constitutes the foundation of the State", which is "the common and indivisible motherland of all its citizens" (art. 10).

19. Constitutional provisions regarding human rights and freedoms are interpreted and applied in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the conventions and other treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party (art. 4, para. 1).

20. The Constitution regulates issues regarding economic relations in society in accordance with the new principles, ensures the right to property, and provides that property may not be used to encroach upon or damage the rights, freedoms and dignity of people (art. 9).

21. In summary, we can say that the main provisions contained in the Constitution are the following: political pluralism, separation of and collaboration among the legislative, executive and judicial powers, the right of all citizens to protection and to develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.

22. The Constitution determines how international treaties are to be enforced in the domestic legal system. Taking into account the importance of respecting fundamental rights and freedoms, the legislator emphasized the supremacy of the international law of human rights and, in article 8 of the Constitution, the Republic of Moldova pledges itself to respect the Charter of the United Nations and the international treaties to which it is a party.

23. The principle of the priority of international documents was recognized also by the Supreme Court of Justice which, after studying the practice of enforcing these constitutional provisions, adopted on 30 January 1996, its decision No. 2 "On the practice in the courts of law in enforcing some provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova" which puts the courts under the obligation, "... in cases when domestic legislation is contrary to international documents, to apply provisions of the international document to which the Republic of Moldova is a party".

24. Following the constitutional provisions, most of the legislative documents of the Republic of Moldova stipulate the supremacy of international law: the Civil Code, the Civil Procedure Code, the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, the Marriage and Family Code, etc.

25. A special role is given in this field to the Constitutional Court which, on notification, examines the constitutionality of the international treaties to which Moldova is a party. In this context, the Constitutional Court applies the provisions of article 4, paragraph 2, of the Constitution, which stipulates: "Whenever disagreements occur between covenants and treaties regarding fundamental human rights signed by the Republic of Moldova and its own national laws, priority shall be given to the international regulations.

26. The rights and freedoms, contained in the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova reproduce, to a great extent, the rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights, reaffirming that "in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of the free human being, as enjoying civil and political freedoms and released from fear and poverty, cannot be accomplished unless conditions which allows every person to enjoy his civil and political rights, as well as his economic, social and cultural rights, are created".

27. Economic, social and political rights constitute the foundation of the multifaceted and full development of the human being. They are no less important than civil and political rights, but their exercise depends also on the resources the society possesses. Yet, this does not mean that the State has no responsibility for guaranteeing them by progressively ensuring their exercise. For this reason, we consider that it is necessary for international bodies to lay stress on the right to development. The notion of development itself needs to be enriched and made more complex.

28. The non-abusive application of these provisions is included in the commitments made by the Republic of Moldova at the moment of its accession, as a full member, to the Council of Europe: national authorities assumed the responsibility to apply restrictions in the exercise of certain rights or freedoms and the exercise of rights and obligations provided by articles 54 and 55 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova only in cases strictly specified by law, in

special situations, such as defence of national security and of order, prevention of calamities and catastrophes, etc. In such cases, the restrictions enforced must be in proportion to the situation that caused it, and may not affect the existence of that right or liberty (art. 54 (2) of the Constitution).

29. In cases when provisions of the legislation dealing with fundamental human rights are in contradiction with the Constitution or with international conventions on human rights, the courts will directly apply the provisions of the latter.

30. Returning to these provisions, we need to mention that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two International Covenants on Human Rights, as well as the European Convention on Human Rights admit, under certain circumstances, the existence of certain limitations and restrictions, which are not specified separately but are formulated with respect to certain rights and liberties, depending on their content. Thus, this means that they may be applied only if they are expressly provided by law, they are necessary in a democratic society for protecting national security, public order, public health and morals, the rights and liberties of others, etc., and they need to be proportionate to the cause that has given rise to them.

31. According to article 15 of the Constitution, citizens of the Republic of Moldova and aliens and stateless persons shall enjoy the same rights and duties except in cases provided by law (art. 19).

32. When the States adhered to the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1996, they pledged to respect and guarantee to all individuals living in their territory, and who are under their jurisdiction, the rights recognized by the Covenant with no discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, social status, birth, or any other criteria. From the moment of adhesion to the European Convention on Human Rights, according to article 1 of this Convention, any individual under the jurisdiction of the signatory parties will be recognized as a holder of the rights and freedoms recognized by the Convention. This principle is equally valid for rights and freedoms recognized by Protocols Nos. 1, 4, 6 and 7. The Republic of Moldova, like all State parties to the Convention, recognizes these rights and freedoms not only for its citizens, but also for the citizens of other signatory States and also for those citizens of one State who are under the jurisdiction of another State which is not a party to the Convention, as well as for stateless people (European Commission for Human Rights, Decision No. 788/60 of 11 January 1961).

33. The general rule formulated by article 29 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969) stipulates that an international treaty will be applied on the whole territory of a signatory State. Taking into account the fact that the European Convention on Human Rights sets forth that rights and freedoms shall be recognized for all individuals under the jurisdiction of the signatory parties, it follows that a State, as is the case of the Republic of Moldova, cannot be responsible for violations of human rights committed on the territory over which that State does not exercise a real jurisdiction. The Convention allows the exclusion of a certain part of the signatory State from the application area of the Convention.

34. Taking into account the situation in the territory on the left bank of the Nistru River (eastern region of the Republic of Moldova), as well as provisions of point 11 of notification 188 (195) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Counsel of Europe, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, when ratifying the European Convention on Human Rights, considered it necessary to formulate a declaration by which the Republic of Moldova has denied its responsibility for acts committed in the territory of the self-proclaimed Nistrian Republic, with the intention to maintain this situation until the conflict in this region is finally solved.

35. The World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, pronounced itself in favour of the creation and consolidation of human rights institutions. It is mentioned in documents adopted by the Conference that every State is entitled to institute those structures which will fully correspond to its needs.

36. In the last two years, legislative and executive bodies of the Republic of Moldova have paid special attention to issues related both to the respect of the constitutional human rights and freedoms and to their protection by the State in case of violation. We can certainly state that the carrying out of the legal and judicial reforms in the country is first of all aimed at improving the human rights protection by the courts. This is confirmed by the change in judicial structures and in the way they are constituted and in the prosecutor's role and functions. Also, a new Law on Notary was passed, and a new draft of the Law on Advocacy has been drafted.

37. At the last and penultimate parliamentary sessions, the Commission for Human Rights, Ethnic Minorities, Cults and Other External Communities worked together with the other permanent commissions.

38. Since 1991, the Department of National Relations and the Use of Languages (art. 27) has been working within the Government. The basic functions of this Department are the following:

Promotion of the State policy regarding national problems;

Representation within the State administration bodies both of the interests of major ethnic groups of the ethnic minority groups;

Ensuring, on the basis of the legislation in force, the use of the official State language and of other languages spoken on the territory of the country;

Support of the activity regarding the statutes of ethnic and cultural structures of the country;

Facilitating the implementation of programmes regarding the national culture of persons from Moldova living outside the republic, by helping them to establish connections with their historical motherland.

39. In the spring of 1996, the second International Conference of Ombudsmen and Human Rights Institutions was held in Chişinău. The problems of creating institutions for human rights protection in various countries were discussed at this Conference. The fact that such a

prestigious forum was held in the Republic of Moldova sped up the elaboration of a draft law on the institution for human rights protection in the country. During the elaboration of the draft of the law regarding human rights defenders, the experience of several European countries in the field was taken into consideration.

40. In October 1997, parliament passed the Law on Ombudsmen. In conformity with this law, parliament assigned three ombudsmen who, together with the staff, constituted an independent legal institution - the Center for Human Rights - that can have affiliates in various localities of the country.

41. The ombudsmen's activity is oriented towards ensuring guarantees for the respect of constitutional rights and freedoms by the central and local public administration bodies, by institutions, organizations and companies with different forms of property, as well as by non-governmental organizations. Ombudsmen contribute to the rehabilitation of citizens' rights, to the improvement of legislation in the field of human rights and to the improvement of the population's legal culture. In their activity, they follow the Constitution and other laws of the Republic of Moldova, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments to which the Republic of Moldova is a party.

42. Ombudsmen examine petitions addressed by citizens of the Republic of Moldova, by foreign citizens who live temporarily or permanently in the country, as well as by stateless persons, regarding the violation of their legitimate rights and interests in the Republic of Moldova. Ombudsmen may start, on their own initiative, examination of the identified cases of violation of human rights and freedoms. In cases when the violation of the plaintiff's rights are established, the ombudsman will submit his conclusion to the appropriate decision-making body or entity, with recommendations regarding the immediate rehabilitation of the plaintiff's rights. Also, he may appeal to the court, asking for the defence of the citizens' interests.

43. On the basis of the conclusion made after the examination of the citizens' petitions, the ombudsman may submit his proposal regarding the improvement of the current legislation in the field of ensuring human rights and freedoms to parliament, and, in cases where serious violations of constitutional rights and freedoms were identified, he has the right to submit a report when parliament is in session and to propose the constitution of a parliamentary committee for the examination of these cases.

44. Ombudsmen have the right to address the Constitutional Court and to request review of the constitutionality of the normative rulings adopted by parliament, the President of the country or by the Government, and to determine whether they are in conformity with the general principles and international documents regarding human rights.

45. Every year, the Center for Human Rights submits a report on the respect for human rights in the Republic of Moldova to parliament. The report refers to fields of social relations in which the most serious violations of human rights and freedoms were identified, to their causes, as well as to measures taken for their elimination, to the improvement of legislation and to the legal education of population. The report is made known to the citizens by its publication in the Monitorul Oficial of the Republic of Moldova.

46. According to article 39 of the Law on Ombudsmen, an Expert Council, composed of specialists in the field of constitutional human rights and freedoms, was created within the Center for Human Rights, aimed at providing consulting assistance. The Council elaborates recommendations on the drafts regarding the improvement of the legislation in the field of human rights and its conformity with international legal acts ratified by the Republic of Moldova, and initiates and elaborates drafts regarding collaboration with international organizations acting in the field of human rights protection, working actively with mass media and non-governmental organizations. Also in accordance with the Law, affiliates of the Center were opened in Bălti and Comrat towns.

47. In order to fulfil its obligations as a State party to the United Nations and other conventions on human rights, a National Commission responsible for Social Problems, headed by one of the Vice-Prime Ministers, was constituted. This Commission has as its objective the elaboration of the initial and periodical reports of the Republic of Moldova, as a State party to the United Nations conventions and other international conventions on human rights, and their submission, in accordance with the terms established by these conventions, to the authorized international bodies. Also, the Commission has the task of coordinating the activities of legal education and training of the population in the field of human rights.

48. Regarding this issue, it should be noted that the Commission does not receive any funding from external sources. In the context of the deep economic crisis facing the country at this stage of transition to a market economy, the financial support of international bodies for such activities would greatly contribute to the effectiveness of the implementation of the international conventions and of the reporting process, and would be highly appreciated by the Government of the Republic of Moldova.

49. We would also like to mention that on 18 June 1998, the first National Conference for Human Rights was held in Chişinău, under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, the National Center for Human Rights and of the Chişinău Office of the United Nations Development Programme. Representatives of State institutions, such as Government, parliament, the President's office, non-governmental organizations, universities, international organizations, as well as representatives of diplomatic missions accredited in Chişinău, participated in the Conference. Within the four working groups of the Conference, the National Report of the Republic of Moldova, "Human Rights: for a Sustainable Development", was concluded and was afterwards presented at the international conference held in Yalta in September 1998.

III. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

50. In the Republic of Moldova there is a diverse and pluralist informational market, in conformity with the role and position that the mass media should have in a State ruled by law. The mass media are required to cover a whole set of functions related to the creation of an efficient system of public control of State authorities. The press, television and radio are the main beneficiaries of the right to information. These public functions impose obligations on the mass media of responsibility equal to the State's duty to honour and guarantee the respect of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

51. The right of a citizen to be informed and to have free access to public information is a right indispensable to the democratic ideals. Citizens of the Republic of Moldova today do not feel as isolated and manipulated as they were during the Soviet regime.

52. The right of a person to information is a fundamental human right, which determines his social, economic and political action and the exercise of his freedoms provided by the Constitution, including the freedom of thought, opinion, creation, public expression, speech, image, or any other expression. This also assumes the possibility of receiving information on social, political, economic, scientific and cultural life, etc. There is no doubt that one cannot speak separately of the mass media and access to information only by incorporating this debate into the general background related to the citizen's access to information of public interest. Formulas such as free access to information or right to information penetrate more and more clearly into the citizen's conscience.

53. We also need to admit that, in the Republic of Moldova, the mentality of certain social segments is not emancipated enough to stimulate courage and insistence in getting public information or to encourage them to use this information with the purpose of participating in public activities, on which their existence depends. This is a process of permanent change. In this context, we can certainly state that the capacity of the society to control the State institutions, depending on the extent to which public opinion is aware of the substance of their activities and of their decisions, has been continuously increasing since the Declaration of Independence was passed.

54. In the period after the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the texts of international conventions and treaties regarding human rights signed by Moldova, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, were published. Their full publication in 26 volumes coordinated by experts from the Law Center, was made official by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of External Affairs.

55. Abolition of the distorted doctrine that dominated the masses' conscience all during the period of communist dictatorship, according to which the State was regarded as a "donor" and not as a "protector" of human rights, is of great significance. Accurate, detailed and accessible information on the tendencies and realities of the modern information society, characteristic of all consolidated democracies, cannot but be welcomed by the whole society. Currently, one can certainly state that the Republic of Moldova includes itself, with more confidence, in a space focused on the principles of free provision, circulation, receipt of and access to information, in conditions of respect of other fundamental values.

56. Unfortunately, in the eastern region of the Republic of Moldova, controlled by the Tiraspol separatist regime, the functioning of mass media differs from the rest of the territory. The right of expression and access to information are in a more precarious situation there. The unconstitutional authorities of this region largely suppress the mass media that are inconvenient for the policies of the separatist regime. There is no political party or newspaper in open opposition to the regime from the region. The circulation of national publications is very low. Free circulation of information will be possible in this region only when the Transnistrian conflict is definitively solved, the Russian Federation withdraws its troops and weapons, and when the independence and sovereignty of our State is consolidated.

57. On 11 February 1999, the parliament of the Republic of Moldova adopted Decision No. 277-XIV, "On the concept of support and promotion of mass media by the State, 1999-2003", submitted as a draft by the Union of Journalists of the Republic of Moldova and considered as a step forward in the consolidation by the State of the freedom and independence of the mass press in the country.

58. Parliament, by mutual agreement with the Government and civil society, among which may be mentioned the Union of Journalists, is called upon to draft and adopt a set of normative rulings aimed at promoting a national fundamental policy in tl.· field. Currently, the Law on the press, in force since 1995, is being re-examined in parliament. In addition, the Law on Access to Information No. 982-XIV of 15 May 2000 (Monitorul Oficial of the Republic of Moldova, 2000, No. 88-90, art. 664), has been passed.

59. As for the Law on the Organization and Functioning of Broadcasting in the Republic of Moldova, a draft is being discussed in parliament. A law on a public audio-visual institution will be included as a separate section of this mentioned law.

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